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CHRISTIAN BÉRARD

AN

Exhibition of Paintings and Décors

THE ARTS COUNCIL 1950

Foreword

CHRISTIAN BÉRARD was a man of generous gifts and personality. He died at the height of his powers in 1949, and his memory has recently been honoured in Paris by an exhibition of his paintings and designs in the Musée d'Art Moderne. London has had the opportunity, both before and since the war, of seeing some of Bérard's full-scale work for the stage in several ballets performed here by the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo and the Ballets des Champs-Elysées, as well as in our own Sadler's Wells Company's *Clock Symphony*. This exhibition offers both a nearer and wider view of Bérard's attainments as an artist, as in addition to examples of his work for the theatre, it includes a considerable number of his oil paintings as well as some of his charming sketches.

Mr. Baird Hastings, who has selected the works to be shown here, and for a further exhibition in the United States, has in every way been invaluable and unstinting with his help, which we acknowledge most sincerely. Madame Vienne, of the Musée d'Art Moderne, has also given great assistance in the practical arrangements. To Mr. Cecil Beaton we are greatly indebted for allowing us to use his tribute to Bérard which appeared in *Ballet*, and to Mr. Richard Buckle, the editor, for his permission to reprint it. The Chronology printed in this Catalogue is derived from the number of Lily and Baird Hastings' revue *Chrysalis* devoted to Bérard, and the cover and illustrations are taken from literature issued by the Ballets des Champs-Elysées, and we gratefully acknowledge these sources. Most of all, we should like to thank the various owners in France, in particular the Musée d'Art Moderne and M. Boris Kochno and Mr. James Thrall Soby, for the generous manner in which they have deprived themselves of the enjoyment of these works for the benefit of the British public.

PHILIP JAMES

Christian Bérard

His talents poured out of him in a continuous flow of inspiration. To be with him was to find life so much fuller of beauty, enjoyment, drama, and excitement. He made all he came among feel a glow of reflected radiance; he had a passionate understanding of the problems of, and sympathy for, every strata of humanity. No wonder he gathered friends about him wherever he went.

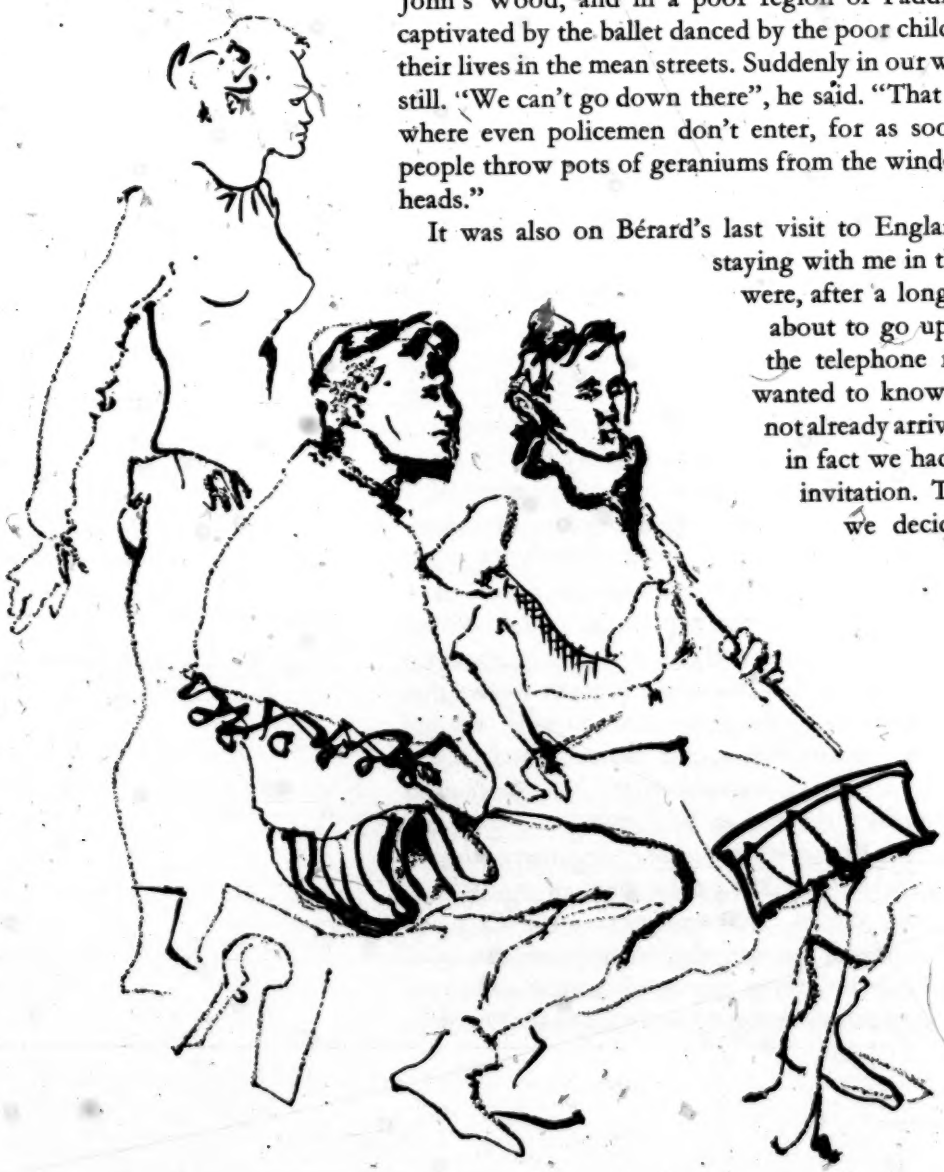
His best canvases show his extraordinary sensibility combined with a monumental power that is rarely seen in painting to-day; his theatrical work brings to the stage an entirely personal sense of colour, an almost magical charm and great powers of invention; his drawings and illustrations portray his innate elegance. But each time one saw Bérard one realised that his work gave only an indication of the full worth of this extraordinary phenomenon. Without being a scholar he knew about everything. I cannot imagine when he had time to read, but he knew all literature. He knew all painting. His taste in matters of architecture, fine furniture, jewels, objets d'art, music, poetry, good food and rare wines, was that of a special and remarkable connoisseur. In the art of living he showed his full genius. His life was a combination of complete simplicity and luxury; with the minimum effort he seemed to do exactly what he wished. Transport, for example, seemed to have no difficulties for him; he could always manage to be where he wanted at the moment he wanted, and everywhere he went he found treasure. In any junk shop he happened to enter he was likely to come across a signed eighteenth-century terra-cotta, or an unfinished Delacroix.

His life, his work, his personality possessed a spontaneity that made it impossible ever to think of him but in the future tense. "What is Bébé doing now?" we asked. "What will his

next pictures be? What is his new décor?" But something about his work and personality had such an individual appeal, and his work such an intimate flavour that one could not realise how universal was the admiration for his work. It has come as a surprise to find that Bérard, with his fine beak-like nose, his untidy red beard and lank wisps of silken hair, was one of the best-known personalities in Paris. So great was his innate dignity, that even under the most farcical circumstances, such as when, in a violent fit of enthusiasm, he would try on himself the latest bonnet in the most fashionable hat-shop, his wild eyes defied one to laugh at him. When he walked down the Quais in his dirty, cigarette-ash covered shirt, his soiled coat and unbuttoned trousers, with his dirty little dog Jacinthe hooked underneath his arm, Bérard was the quintessence of French taste and elegance, and, for me, the Degas sketch in the Tate of Carlo Pellegrini will always be the most exact portrait of Bérard.

My friendship for over twenty-five years with Bérard has been one of the sweetest and most rewarding of my life. I knew it was never possible, under any circumstances, to quarrel with such a kind, generous ally, and from enjoying his galvanising company I have learnt more from him than from any other person. By watching his passionate enthusiasms I have been able to appreciate many things that had before meant nothing to me. He taught me to find beauty in the most unexpected places, and he showed me that beauty lay in many realms that used to be considered ugly. He proved that an ugly material or colour could be just the one to give character and atmosphere to a picture, a scene, a decoration or a hat. He showed me the romantic allure there is to be found in squalor and poverty; to go about Paris with him was to find the strangest, most mysterious environs, and he gave a touch of real gold to the most glittering circles. Likewise, whenever Christian Bérard came to London, he was able to discover the most remarkable, generally unknown, places of interest—the purlieus of Covent Garden had especial beauty for him. Two days

after arrival on his last visit here, he took me on a tour of discovery. We went to see the remarkable objets d'arts in a jeweller's shop behind Leicester Square; we climbed on to the roof of the fantastic and derelict Alma Tadema House in St. John's Wood, and in a poor region of Paddington he was captivated by the ballet danced by the poor children who lived their lives in the mean streets. Suddenly in our walk he stopped still. "We can't go down there", he said. "That is a bad street where even policemen don't enter, for as soon as they do, people throw pots of geraniums from the windows onto their heads."



It was also on Bérard's last visit to England that, when staying with me in the country, we were, after a long evening talk, about to go up to bed when the telephone rang. A friend wanted to know why we were not already arrived at her party; in fact we had forgotten the invitation. There and then we decided to use the

remainder of my petrol hoard by motoring to this party a hundred miles away. The lights of my car went wrong; there was a heavy ground fog (even worse than those imitation mists in the "Hamlet" film); we lost our way, and after a dozen minor disasters we arrived for the fag-end of the party at three o'clock in the morning. But during that six hours' journey Bérard had never ceased to delight me with his enchanted conversation. He had taken me into all parts of the world, into many spheres of art, into the innermost secrets of the most fascinating characters, strangers mysterious and unknown, of celebrities, and with witty or romantic anecdotes about Royalties or jail-birds. The journey, which might have been a disaster, had been turned into an Arabian Night's Tale.

It was a week later that Bérard was unexpectedly taken to hospital (his friends were so surprised to hear he was at Waterloo Hospital for Women) suffering from a poisoned abscess. When I visited him he eulogised—with his usual passionate enthusiasm—the beauties of the Waterloo Road and the romantic views from the window of his small, cupboard-like room. But he confessed that, when he was suddenly taken ill and brought to the hospital, he felt that he would not mind if he were to die. He said—though by his ebullience he had hidden this from us—that he had suffered so much in life.

With his death there is no one to approximate the position he held in the various fields of activity he stimulated to life. By some critics his work has been put on the level of a Pontormo. But Bérard was not only a painter; he was an inventor, an influence, a yardstick of taste in our times. Now the vital fount is quenched, and this loss will be felt for a long time to come. His friends can content themselves that their sojourn upon this planet coincided with his.

CECIL BEATON

Chronology

1902 Born in Paris, August 20, son of the architect to the city of Paris and Marthe de Borniol.

1915 Attends the Lycée Janson de Sailly.

1920 Enters the Académie Ranson. Studies under the direction of the Nabi Group, particularly of Edouard Vuillard and Maurice Denis.

1922 First visits Italy.

1923 Draws in the Louvre.

1924 Studies at the Académie Julian.

1925 Exhibits a painting for the first time at the Galerie Pierre. Georges Geffroy calls Derain's attention to his work.

1926 Exhibits at the Galerie Drouot with several friends, in-including Berman and Pavel Tchelitchev who had recently arrived from Berlin. This group is referred to as Neo-Romantic or Neo-Humanist.

1927 Meets Diaghileff. Illustrates *Babylone* and *Opéra.*

1928 Paints portrait of Cocteau.

1929 Moves to the rue Casimir Delavigne.

1930 Designs settings for Kochno's ballet "La Nuit" (music by Sauguet, choreography by Lifar) first presented in the Cochrane Revue of 1930 in Manchester and London. Designs settings for Cocteau's "La Voix Humaine", produced at the Comédie Française on February 25.

1931 Portrait of Pierre Colle.
Begins mural paintings for Marie Blanche de Polignac.

1932 Work for the "Ballets 1933" and the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo: Cotillon, Mozartiana.

1933 Begins work with Vogue.

1934 Series of paintings "Les Plages". Designs for Cocteau's "La Machine Infernale".

1935 Design for Bourdet's "La Reine Margot", first performed at the Théâtre Marigny on November 26.

1936 Designs for Massine's ballet "Symphonie Fantastique", first danced at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, on July 24, by the Ballets Russes de Monte Carlo.
Jouvet's production of "Ecole des Femmes".

1937 Settings for Jouvet's production of Corneille's "L'Illusion Comique" at the Comédie Française, February 16.

1938 Designs for "Cyrano de Bergerac", "Le Corsair", and Massine's Seventh Symphony ballet produced at Monte Carlo.

1940 Designs for Cocteau's "Les Monstres Sacrés", produced at the Théâtre Michel, February 17.
Goes to the country.

1943 Décors and costumes for Cocteau's "Renaud et Armide", Achard's "Voulez-vous jouer avec Moâ?", and Jean Girardoux's "Sodome et Gomorrhe".

1945 Designs for "Les Forains" produced by Boris Kochno's Ballets des Champs-Elysées on March 2 at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées. Sets and costumes for "La Folle de Chaillot", Jean Girardoux's last play, produced by Jouvet on December 19. Work for *Théâtre de la Mode*.

1946 Designs costumes and works with Cocteau on the making of his film "La Belle et la Bête". Costumes for Cocteau's "L'Aigle à Deux Têtes", first produced at the Théâtre Hébertot on December 20.

1947 Designs for Jouvet's production of Molière's "Don Juan", and Barrault's of "Amphitryon".

1948 More ballet designs, including those for "Clock Symphony", produced at Covent Garden on June 25. Many oil paintings.

1949 Designs for Jouvet's production of Molière's "Les Fourberies de Scapin", February 18.
Dies on February 12. Funeral at St. Sulpice. Buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery, Paris.

Catalogue

OIL PAINTINGS

1 PORTRAIT OF RENÉ CREVEL
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard 25*
Oil on canvas, 80×65 cm. ($31\frac{1}{2}\times25\frac{5}{8}$ in.)
Lent by the Musée d'Art Moderne, Paris

2 PHANTOM
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard 25*
Oil on canvas, 70×60 cm. ($27\frac{1}{2}\times23\frac{5}{8}$ in.)
Lent by M. Jacques Bonjean

3 THE CHILDREN
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard 25*
Oil on canvas, 92×60 cm. ($36\frac{1}{4}\times23\frac{5}{8}$ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

4 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN IN BLUE
Signed and dated bottom right: *A Oberlé, 26, C. Bérard*
Oil on canvas, 100×70 cm. ($39\frac{3}{8}\times27\frac{1}{2}$ in.)
Lent by Mme. Claude Hersent

5 WOMAN IN BED
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard 27*
Oil on canvas, 54×65 cm. ($21\frac{1}{4}\times25\frac{5}{8}$ in.)
Lent by Mme. la Vicomtesse de Noailles

6 THE MEETING (LA SALTINMBANQUE ET LE BEQUILLARD)
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard 28*
Oil on canvas, 50×60 cm. ($19\frac{3}{4}\times23\frac{5}{8}$ in.)
Lent by M. Paul Beglarian

7 THE YOUNG GIRL ACROBAT
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard* 30
Oil on canvas, 61 × 50 cm. (24 × 19¾ in.)
Lent by Mme. Claude Hersent

8 PORTRAIT OF A YOUNG MAN
Signed and dated: A Jean Bourgoint, *Bérard* 30
Oil on canvas, 80 × 56 cm. (31½ × 22 in.)
Lent by M. Van Moppes

9 SELF-PORTRAIT
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard* 30
Oil on canvas, 41 × 27 cm. (16⅛ × 10⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Jacques Bonjean

10 PORTRAIT OF A CLOWN
Signed bottom left: *Bérard.* (*c.* 1930)
Oil on board, 106 × 75 cm. (41¾ × 29½ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

11 PORTRAIT OF THE WRITER JEAN DESBORDES
Signed and dated bottom left: *Bérard* 31
Oil on canvas, 75 × 116 cm. (29½ × 45¾ in.)
Lent by M. Paul Beglarian

12 PORTRAIT OF A DANCER (TOUMANOVA)
Signed and dated bottom right: *Bérard* 31
Oil on canvas, 87 × 60 cm. (34¼ × 23⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

13 SELF-PORTRAIT
Signed and dated bottom left: *à Boris Kochno Toulon Sept.* 1932 *C. Bérard*
Oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm. (28¾ × 23⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

14 THE BEACH
Signed and dated bottom left: *C. Bérard* 33
Oil on canvas, 78 × 113 cm. (30¾ × 44½ in.)
Lent by Mr. James Thrall Soby

15 PORTRAIT OF A DANCER (YOUSSKEVITCH)
(*c.* 1938)
Oil on canvas, 92 × 60 cm. (36¼ × 23⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

16 BOYS AT FOURCQ
Signed bottom left: *Bérard.* (1944)
Oil on canvas, 50 × 70 cm. (19¾ × 27½ in.)
Lent by Mme. Claude Hersent

17 YOUNG GIRL WITH A FAN
Signed bottom right: *Bérard*
Oil on canvas, 100 × 65 cm. (39⅜ × 25⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

18 PORTRAIT OF A YOUTH
Oil on canvas, 109 × 78 cm. (43 × 30¾ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

19 MODEL WITH YELLOW FEET
Oil on canvas, 65 × 54 cm. (25⅝ × 21¼ in.)
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

20 ACROBAT
Oil on canvas, 73 × 60 cm. (28¾ × 23⅝ in.)
Lent by M. Christian Dior

21 CONVERSATION

Signed bottom left: *Bérard*

Oil on canvas, 24 × 19 cm. ($9\frac{1}{2} \times 7\frac{1}{2}$ in.)

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

22 HEAD OF A MAN (SLEEPING FIGURE)

Bérard's last painting, 1949

Oil on canvas, 33 × 40 cm. ($13 \times 15\frac{3}{4}$ in.)

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

SETTINGS AND COSTUMES FOR THE THEATRE

23 SET DESIGN FOR THE BALLET "COTILLON"

Gouache

"Cotillon", with choreography by Balanchine, music by Emmanuel Chabrier and settings and costumes by Bérard, was first performed by the "Ballets Russes" in Monte Carlo on April 3, 1933.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

24 SKETCH FOR THE BALLET "COTILLON"

See above *Lent by M. Raoul Leven*

25 SET DESIGN FOR THE BALLET "MOZARTIANA"

Gouache

"Mozartiana", with choreography by Balanchine to music by Mozart, orchestrated by Tchaikowsky, and with setting and costumes by Bérard, was first performed at the Théâtre des Champs-Elysées in June 1933 by "Ballets 1933".

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

26, 27, 28 THREE COSTUME DESIGNS FOR "LA MACHINE INFERNALE"

Gouache

Cocteau's "La Machine Infernale", produced by Louis Jouvet, had its first performance in Paris at the Comédie des Champs-Elysées on April 10, 1934.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

29 A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM

Chinese ink and gouache

A single performance of Shakespeare's play with music by Jacques Ibert, and settings and costumes by Bérard, was given at the Comtesse Pastré's Château de Montredon, Marseilles, in April 1942.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

30 SET DESIGN FOR "RENAUD ET ARMIDE"

Pastel

Cocteau's "Renaud et Armide", with settings and costumes by Bérard, was produced in April 1943 at the Comédie Française.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

31, 32 TWO SET DESIGNS FOR "LA FOLLE DE CHAILLOT"

Gouache

"La Folle de Chaillot", Jean Girardoux's last finished play, was produced by Louis Jouvet, with incidental music by Sauguet and sets and costumes by Bérard. It was first performed at the Théâtre de l'Athénée on December 19, 1945.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

33, 34 TWO DESIGNS FOR THE BALLET "LES FORAINS"

Pastel and Gouache

"Les Forains" with choreography by Roland Petit, music by Henri Sauguet, and settings and costumes by Bérard, was first performed by Kochno's "Ballets des Champs-Elysées" on March 2, 1945.

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

35, 36 TWO DESIGNS FOR COCTEAU'S FILM "LA BELLE ET LA BÊTE"

Pastel. 1946

Lent by M. Boris Kochno

37 SET DESIGN FOR "L'AIGLE À DEUX TÊTES"
Gouache
Cocteau's "L'Aigle à Deux Têtes", with settings and costumes by Bérard, was produced at the Théâtre Hébertôt in Paris in December 1946.
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

38 SET DESIGN FOR "DON JUAN OU LE FESTIN DE PIERRE"
Pastel
Molière's "Don Juan" was revised by Louis Jouvet and performed with settings and costumes designed by Bérard, at the Théâtre Athénée in December 1947
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

DRAWINGS AND SKETCHES, ETC.

39, 40 TWO LANDSCAPES, FOURQUES
Pastel
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

41 PORTRAIT SKETCH OF RENÉ CREVEL
Pen and ink
Lent by M. Raoul Leven

42 HEAD OF A BOY
Charcoal and chalk
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

43 THE BOY OF GOUDE
Chinese ink
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

44 BÉRARD WITH TWO OTHER PEOPLE ON A BEACH
Gouache
Lent by M. Boris Kochno

45 "LA BONNE VIE"
Pastel sketch

Lent by M. Raoul Leven

46–55 SERIES OF TEN DRAWINGS OF LONDON
Gouache
These were done in 1948 when Bérard was recovering from an illness.

Lent by Mme. Claude Hersent

56–63 EIGHT BOOKS WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY BÉRARD: OPÉRA, BABYLONE, CHRISTINE, SODOME ET GOMORRHE, and CLAUDINE (four volumes)

Lent by Lily and Baird Hastings

64, 65, 66 THREE THEATRE AND BALLET PROGRAMMES DESIGNED BY BÉRARD: LA NUIT, LES FORAINS, DON JUAN

Lent by Lily and Baird Hastings

67, 68 TWO MUSIC COVERS DESIGNED BY BÉRARD (Poulenc, Sauguet)

Lent by Lily and Baird Hastings

69 "THÉÂTRE DE LA MODE" (Fashion show organised by Bérard)

Lent by Lily and Baird Hastings

70 SCARF DESIGNED BY BÉRARD (Produced by Ascher)

Lent by Lily and Baird Hastings

OTHER ARTS COUNCIL EXHIBITIONS

Berthe Morisot

French Paintings of the 19th Century
from the Burrell Collection

Paintings from Woburn Abbey
lent by the Duke of Bedford

Mural Painting

LUND HUMPHRIES